

New North Carolina Books

Maurice C. York
Compiler

A. Roger Ekirch. ***"Poor Carolina": Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729-1776.*** Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981. 305 pp. \$23.50.

North Carolinians long have spoken of their state as a "vale of humility between two mountains of conceit," but we seldom look to our early days for a more basic understanding of this bit of Tar Heel doggerel. Roger Ekirch, an assistant professor of history at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, begins his *"Poor Carolina"* with an examination of geographical matters that set North Carolina apart from all the British colonies. To this day we hear echoes of the fact that the colony, unlike all others on the Atlantic Coast, had no real seaport because of its great barrier islands, shallow sounds, and the comparatively late development of Wilmington. The early trade of the colony went through South Carolina and tidewater Virginia.

The year 1729 saw the disrupting change from a proprietary to a royal colony. Beginning with this event, Mr. Ekirch clearly points out other factors in provincial development that made North Carolina unlike other British colonies.

Settlers from Virginia and South Carolina in the early days were the first generation on the land and were individuals seeking less, rather than more, or new, governmental control. The great numbers of people who later came from the North down the Valley of Virginia into the Piedmont area were interested in the vast, rich lands that were to be had; they were culturally unlike the earlier settlers in the East. The older Albemarle region had economic ties to Virginia, while the Cape Fear Valley had many economic and social ties to South Carolina. In the 1740s, constant shortage of currency and the lack of ready markets for the produce from small landholdings resulted in a real split, North and South, in the colony. The great difference in slaveholding cannot be overlooked; the slave population in the state was vastly smaller than in Virginia and South Carolina.

Royal governors had their own economic axes to grind, and colonial oversight from London left much to be desired. Land and tax frauds were common. The average colonist down on the farm found little in the halls of government to trust. The author points out that the Regulators' reaction to these conditions are open to new interpretations. We have here a clear picture of the development of a colony, at times in near chaos and rife with corruption, toward self-consciousness and self-government based upon a diverse middle-class population.

The chapter notes, bibliography, and index add to the worth of this well-bound book, which would be useful in North Carolina collections in public and academic libraries.

Louise V. Boone
Albemarle Regional Library

Carole Marsh. *The Haunt of Hope Plantation*. Tryon, N.C.: Gallopade Publishing Group, 1981. 117 pp. \$3.95 paper.

Many children today are not fond of history, yet few can resist a mystery. Ms. Marsh has combined both in *The Haunt of Hope Plantation*, which tells the story of eleven children who are brought together at historic Hope Plantation in Bertie County to "interpret ... how the [David] Stone family lived" in the early 1800s.

The main character is Michael, who represents the only boy in Governor Stone's family. His mother, a writer, is researching an article on the famous Hope library. Other characters include ten girls from around the state of North Carolina, Ms. Rogers from the Historic Office in Raleigh, and Ms. Turnbull, the schoolteacher.

Uncle Raz (Erasmus Brown) owns the first published map of the state, which is on display in the library. He arrives at the plantation to rededicate the historic map, and Stacy, his ten-year-old niece, is horrified to see how destitute he has become.

The "interpretation" begins, and the children learn to live in the old house as their counterparts did. But the map mysteriously disappears and clues are left for the children to follow. Michael is determined to solve the mystery because his mother has been accused of stealing the historic treasure. The climax of the story takes place at the Halloween Ball. Fog and ghosts show up on schedule; the ending is predictable.

The book has several flaws. Many colloquialisms are used, often at the expense of good grammar, and there are two glaring errors in spelling. With so many characters, it is difficult to develop them well, yet the story would be too long and tedious if each was given in-depth treatment. It stretches the imagination to believe that a ten-year-old, no matter how precocious, could conceive and achieve such a theft. Like Marsh's *The Missing Head Mystery*, this book is not always believable.

The idea of the series is excellent and Ms. Marsh's latest "History Mystery" is rich in local color and historical background. The story does provide good information about the state, but this advantage is compromised by the lack of quality writing.

Lois Schier
Layne Ball
Pat Melton
Lexington Public Library

Frank Deford. *Everybody's All-American*. New York: Viking Press, 1981. 314 pp. \$13.95.

This is a good novel about an aging hero's inability to escape the past. Gavin Grey, the Grey Ghost, is a famous All-American halfback for the Tar Heels who later goes on to the pros for more fame and fortune. Gavin is the darling of the Carolina campus, a perfect specimen of the 1950s with "bright blue eyes, a clean face, [and] a dazzling smile. . . ." This crew-cut knight of the gridiron even marries the beautiful Blueberry Queen whose name, of course, is "Babs." Life, however, is not a football game, and Deford's basic story is about the inability of the hero to face the reality of the world.

Deford has peopled this novel with a rich collection of finely drawn characters. The best of these is the Grey Ghost's nephew, Donnie, who is the narrator. Donnie provides a counterpoint to the Ghost, for he is a stolid, unromantic figure who faces the vicissitudes of life in the best way he can. Yet, he is the real winner—the real All-American—because his sensitivity for and understanding of people are the basic needs and realities of life. Also, Donnie's coming of age is closer to our own experiences. The similarity draws us to this character and gives us a deeper understanding of him.

Deford's pictures of Carolina are clear and precise. He evidently has spent some time in the "Southern Part of Heaven," for he captures the spirit of Chapel Hill as well as its physical aspects. His southern accents are, however, atrocious and exceedingly annoying! Most of the characters run around saying things such as "Kowlinah," "PO-lice," and "FO-teen." Another annoying feature of this novel is Deford's effort to compare the Grey Ghost with J. E. B. Stuart of War Between the States fame. This device is ill conceived, awkward, and patently ridiculous; in fact, it seems to have been added as an afterthought.

This book is recommended for public libraries and academic collections. Public school libraries should examine it first, because it contains some sex and some "bad" language.

Ridley Kessler
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Amanda Mackay. *Death on the Eno*. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1981. 231 pp. \$12.95.

When I began reading this novel, I realized that I was apt to be overly critical of the description of the locale, where I was born (Durham) and raised (Orange County). It did not take me very long, however, to become far more interested in the mystery and the characters of this novel than in its setting. That the setting was familiar simply made the book more fun to read.

Ms. Mackay published her first book, *Death is Academic*, in 1976. In it she introduced her main character, Dr. Hannah Land, a young woman, recently

divorced, who had completed her Ph.D. in political science at Columbia University and who arrived in Durham to take up her first teaching position at Duke University. The entire novel takes place during Hannah's first few days in Durham, during which a professor in the Political Science Department is poisoned. Because she is an alert, objective observer, Hannah solves the mystery in cooperation with Detective Lieutenant Bobby Gene Jenkins of the Durham police force.

Death on the Eno begins six months later, in June of 1974, just as Hannah is finishing her first term of teaching at Duke. Once again there is a sudden death, and once again Hannah involves herself in the solution of the mystery.

In the first novel there were so many characters involved—the entire Political Science Department at Duke and their families—that they never seemed to be more than stereotypical and superficial, almost as if Ms. Mackay were afraid to tell the reader too much about them for fear of exposing their motivations and thus giving away the murderer. In this second novel, on the other hand, the action centers around a single family, the Turnbulls, and a young stranger who is down in Durham to set up hijackings of cigarette shipments. The reader gets to know all of these people well, grows to understand their motivations, and still has trouble detecting the murderer. While *Death on the Eno* can easily stand on its own, the development of and relationships between the main characters make more sense if one has read both these novels in the order in which they were written.

Amanda Mackay grew up in Virginia and was educated at Radcliffe and Harvard. She earned a master's degree in political science at Columbia University before coming to Durham with her husband, a professor in the Political Science Department at Duke. She is, therefore, writing about circumstances not unlike her own. In notes at the beginning of both novels, Ms. Mackay states that she has made an effort to recreate the places and atmosphere of Durham, to "render faithfully the solid spirit of the place." Ms. Mackay has accomplished this goal, and she has become a good mystery writer at the same time.

I find myself looking forward to another mystery to be solved by the bright and unlikely detective, Dr. Hannah Land, even at the risk of a rise in the murder rate in our area. *Death on the Eno* is good, well-written fiction. It deserves a place in any general fiction collection, especially in North Carolina's public libraries.

Mary Boone
Chapel Hill Public Library

Durward T. Stokes. *Company Shops: The Town Built by a Railroad*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1981. 169 pp. \$14.95.

In 1977, when the City of Burlington, North Carolina, began an urban renewal project under the name of "Company Shops Mall," the author of this

book learned that few of the local residents knew that Company Shops was the name of the town that was the forerunner of Burlington. In an effort to record the history of the area, Dr. Stokes, who was born in Burlington and grew up hearing tales of the railroad from his mother's family, has very accurately and factually told the story of Company Shops.

This history begins in 1848, when the North Carolina General Assembly authorized a railroad that would connect the coastal plain of the state with the Piedmont, thereby aiding the development of commerce throughout the state. The North Carolina Railroad Company then constructed a line between Goldsboro and Charlotte. Shortly after the railroad began operating, railroad officials determined the need for maintenance and repair shops for the equipment. Their recommendation was to locate the shops at the midpoint of the 223 miles of track, which happened to be Alamance County. Progressive-minded local landowners agreed to sell the necessary land to the North Carolina Railroad Company and even obtained funds from other citizens in the county to acquire the railroad shops for the county. Because of the activity surrounding the profitable railroad offices and repair shops, the town grew and prospered. Wages were good, and many skilled workers were attracted to the area because of the railroad.

The influence of the railroad on the development of local churches, schools, and businesses is described in interesting detail, supported by official records, newspapers, photographs, and interviews with local residents. The extensive appendices, bibliography, and index will enhance the book's use to students of local history. *Company Shops* is primarily a history of one town, and would be of limited interest in libraries beyond Alamance County, except for library collections concerned with the history of the railroad within the state.

The author, a former history professor at Elon College, recently has completed a history of that school, and has written numerous articles on Alamance County local history.

Margaret B. Blanchard
Central N.C. Regional Library

Frank Stick. ***An Artist's Catch: Watercolors by Frank Stick***. Edited by David Stick. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981. 256 pp. \$24.95 boxed.

Frank Leonard Stick (1884-1966) was one of the most popular American wildlife painters and illustrators of the twenties. His experience as a guide, trapper, and fisherman, and the technique he acquired under the dean of American illustrators, Howard Pyle, enable him to depict his outdoor subjects with considerable skill and understanding. In the 1910s and 1920s, Stick's work appeared on numerous calendars as well as in books and magazines including *Field and Stream*, *Outdoor America*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Redbook*, *Collier's*, and *McCall's*.

The demand for his wildlife pictures eventually resulted in an output of illustrations repeating a successful but, to the artist, increasingly tiresome formula. At the end of the 1920s, Stick closed his studio, and for a quarter of a century turned to other pursuits. He became known both as a developer of seashore property and as an ardent conservationist who was instrumental in setting up Cape Hatteras National Seashore and the Virgin Islands National Park.

Frank Stick was in his sixties when he returned to painting seascapes and fish of the southern coast and the Caribbean. Working in watercolors, he concentrated on an extensive series of paintings that would accurately depict the vibrant and distinctive coloration of live fish in their habitat. A fine painter and dedicated fisherman, he set out to produce "a better fish book" than those that were available to him for consultation.

The artist caught many of the fish included in the series and relied on commercial fishermen for others. He made preliminary sketches and color notations of the live fish and dissected the specimens afterwards. In 1966, shortly before Frank Stick's death, many of the finished paintings were included in a successful exhibition of his work at Nags Head. Fifteen years later, the University of North Carolina Press made them available to a wider audience.

The 285 color plates included in *An Artist's Catch* represent more than seventy families of fish. According to the introduction written by David Stick, the artist's son, the identification of their individual members, pictured in various stages of development with considerable attention to detail, was confirmed by a professional ichthyologist. There is no doubt that Frank Stick, the ardent fisherman, left to his fishing friends a useful legacy.

The full-page illustrations are of excellent quality, both as works of art and as color reproductions. Stick had the ability to portray the force and power of movement of the fish fighting the fishing line, crashing through the water, and flying for a split second toward a stormy sky. He knew how to endow a nature study with drama; herein lies the continuing popularity of Stick's wildlife paintings.

The majority of the individual studies (black drum, p. 94; weakfish, p. 105; yellow perch, p. 226) attest to Stick's competent command of the watercolor technique. The wetness of the fish is indicated by the fluidity of the coloring; the attention to detail does not detract from the free and lively handling of the fresh catch.

In some instances, however, a more selective editing would have eliminated the impression of the uneven quality of both the paintings and the reproductions. The publication is essentially a picture book, and would have been better served if the less successful plates had been left out. The fishes painted against a garish background of solid greens or blues are especially disappointing, and were obviously included to enlighten a fisherman, not to impress a fellow artist. Nevertheless, *An Artist's Catch* will be of interest not only to ichthyologists, but also to all library patrons interested in wildlife

paintings and appreciative of a fisherman-painter who knew and loved both his subject and his craft.

Anna Dvořák

North Carolina Museum of Art

Henry Lumpkin. ***From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South***. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981. 332 pp. \$19.50.

This is an interesting and useful work with considerable new information. It will appeal to the Revolutionary War buff and prove to be handy for quick reference. Written by a former military historian who presently is a member of the faculty at the University of South Carolina, this book contains details and descriptions that can best be appreciated and reported by one experienced in military history. Nevertheless, it is written in a clear and understandable style. As the title declares, it is an account of events during the American Revolution in the South between the capture of Savannah, Georgia, by the British in December, 1778, and their surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, in October, 1781. Two introductory chapters, however, set the stage, while midway there is a pause for a chapter dealing with "Weapons and Uniforms." A concluding chapter, "Why the British Lost the War in the South," will be especially informative for the general reader.

In addition to the fact-packed text, other useful features that librarians will especially appreciate are a detailed chronology of the Revolution from 1775 to 1783, which covers events throughout the country, an appendix setting forth the names of commanders and the units involved in the major engagements in the South (including the naval vessels for coastal battles), a selected bibliography arranged by broad topic, and a fairly detailed index.

Having read this book and also returned to it many times with delight to seek particular information, I must admit that North Carolina has been slighted. This is all the more apparent because South Carolina has been treated in such detail. An examination of the author's acknowledgments indicates that except for assistance at Guilford Court House National Military Park, no one in North Carolina assisted or contributed to his work. It is my belief that a reader in this state might have suggested the correct form for Sherrill's Ford, Torrence's Tavern, and other places, and told the author of the role of David Fanning in the raid on Hillsborough (as the name then was and now is spelled, not Hillsboro). He might have been told of battles in North Carolina (Lindley's Mill, for example) that were as significant as some of those in South Carolina that he covered so well. It is possible that he might have learned that Colonel Elijah Clarke moved to Georgia from North Carolina, not Virginia. Perhaps a Tar Heel reader, or any other one for that matter, might have recommended that Lumpkin avoid current fads of language, such as the one revealed in his use of "fisherpeople" instead of fishermen.

The maps and illustrations, many in color, are the crowning glory of this book. Its large format, attractive type, and general makeup will suggest that serious books can also be attractive books.

William S. Powell

University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill

Charles Edwards. ***The Hell You Say***. Illustrated by David Moffett. Raleigh: Old Sparta Press, 1980. 209 pp. \$12.95.

The Hell You Say is a humorous collection of stories, incidents, and memories that Charles Edwards either has been involved in or heard during his life as a child in Edgecombe County, a student at what now is East Carolina University, a sergeant in World War II, an undertaker, a mayor, a judge of recorder's court, and an employee with several state and federal agencies. This collection of stories was begun in 1949 for his daughter so that she would know about him and his times.

The stories sound familiar to anyone who has lived in eastern North Carolina. There are stories about local customs, courting, weddings, funerals, church picnics, family problems, local justice, elections, and neighborhood characters. Some of these characters are dead, but some still are living. These stories are similar to the tales that compose the community gossip in any small town. They are the kind that one would expect to hear while sitting around the local service station or country store.

Charles Edward's good-natured humor shows through in every story. He has a sympathetic understanding of human nature and of how things work in small towns. Although some of the events he writes about are unsavory, he always manages to find the kindest explanation for a person's actions. His wide experience in many vocations and avocations has provided him the opportunity to see the ridiculous and the tragic situations in which people often find themselves.

Although this book is a good introduction to the yarns and customs of eastern North Carolina and good reading for anyone familiar with the people and places mentioned in it, its earthy humor will annoy some readers. *The Hell You Say* is appropriate for public libraries or North Carolina collections.

June Parker

Sheppard Memorial Library
Greenville

Doris Betts. ***Heading West***. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981. 359 pp. \$13.50.

At thirty-four, Nancy Finch seems destined to become the next spinster librarian of Greenway, North Carolina. She dropped out of the University of

North Carolina at Chapel Hill in her second year to care for an arthritic mother and a brother with a brain lesion. Working at the library, she dreams of escaping the "unsatisfactory conditions" of her life. She endures and unwillingly takes an annual vacation with her sister and brother-in-law, Faye and Eddie Rayburn. As they are traveling in western North Carolina, the vacation is interrupted by Dwight Anderson, a man without moral sense and apparently without rational motivation. Dwight kidnaps Nancy and carries her to Arizona. *Heading West* is the story of that journey and of Nancy Finch's odyssey to self-awareness and independence.

Although Dwight is an "unsatisfactory kidnapper," Nancy's reaction is ambiguous. Her situation is complicated by the addition of a second hostage—a corrupt judge running from justice. Nancy agrees to go with her kidnapper to Arizona and in fact passes up several opportunities to escape. In Arizona, Nancy is befriended by Chan Thatcher, a mildly eccentric woman who breeds dogs. Chan carries Nancy to the Grand Canyon, and fleeing both Dwight and her past, she climbs down. Dwight pursues her to the novel's climax and his death. Nancy engages in an archetypal struggle to walk out of the Canyon to a new life. Defeated by heat and illness, she is flown out by park officials and taken in by Chan. She falls rather gently in love with Chan's son, Hunt, but returns to North Carolina to come to terms with both Dwight Anderson and her family. Increasingly self-confident, Nancy soon puts her kidnapping and martyrdom behind her and returns to Hunt a free woman.

Heading West is a literate book that manages to be romantic without making undue concessions to the genre of romance. Nancy Finch has realistic depth, and other main characters are well developed and converse believably. Much of the book is descriptive or reflective, and the author's narrative is particularly strong. Descriptive passages are concise without being sparse and convey a vivid sense of person or place. The high quality of this fiction should guarantee this volume a place in academic libraries. It also belongs in any public library with an interest in quality fiction.

Doris Betts, who like Nancy Finch left school without a degree, teaches English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has published three novels, *The River to Pickle Beach*, *The Scarlet Thread*, and *Tall Houses in Winter* and three volumes of short stories, *Beasts in the Southern Wild*, *The Astronomer and Other Stories*, and *The Gentle Insurrection*.

Daniel S. Austin

Wayne County Public Library

Kays Gary. ***Kays Gary, Columnist: A Collection of His Writings Compiled by His Friends***. Edited with a foreword by C. A. McKnight. Charlotte: East Woods Press, 1981. 185 pp. \$10.95.

Kays Gary writes compassionate, people-oriented columns for *The Charlotte Observer*. He writes mainly of joy and tragedy in the human heart.

Since 1952, he has written over four thousand columns. *Kays Gary, Columnist* contains sixty-three of them.

The book is a celebration of the man. Several of Gary's friends have written short, introductory pieces to the different sections of the book. These pieces supply bits of biographical information on Gary; they also express their authors' affection for him. The friends include newspaper editors and writers C. A. "Pete" McKnight, Dot Jackson, Jerry Bledsoe, Jack Claiborne, and Jim Bishop, as well as Jack Yarbrough of Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Shelby and Sister Marie Patrice of Holy Angels Nursery in Belmont.

The columns are arranged under five categories: Bleeding Heart Stories, Milestones of Life, Reminiscences, Cinderella Stories, and Political and Social Commentary. Bleeding Heart Stories are about suffering people and the goodness of other people trying to help them out. Milestones of Life are moments of self-examination or self-realization, such as seeing one's child through a nearly fatal illness.

One of Gary's Reminiscences describes the front-porch culture of his childhood. With tongue-in-cheek humor, he speaks of the demise of front porches as a "Communist plot." The main Cinderella Story involves the relationship among Gary, his readers, and the Holy Angels Nursery. In response to several columns about the orphans there, Gary's readers sent tens of thousands of dollars for the nursery.

Occasionally, Gary writes Political and Social Commentary. His poem, "Dorothy Counts," depicts the dignity of the first black person to attend a previously white high school in Charlotte. In another column, Gary discusses the right-to-die debate in the context of his mother's long-term illness. In yet another, he expresses outrage at Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon.

Despite its brevity, this book succeeds in conveying the flavor and quality of Gary's writing. His prose is direct, staccato, often poignant, sometimes majestic, and often shaded with Biblical allusion. Always, he brings the perspective of the human brotherhood and sisterhood to the events of life.

The book is especially appropriate for public libraries where *The Charlotte Observer* is read. Other public and academic libraries in North Carolina and South Carolina may want to consider it.

Skip Auld

Public Library of Charlotte and
Mecklenburg County

Chris Hall. *Southern Rock: A Climber's Guide*. Charlotte: East Woods Press, 1981. 144 pp. \$7.95 paper.

This pocket guidebook features popular rock-climbing areas in the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. North Carolina, with its larger expanses of rugged terrain, occupies somewhat more than half the content.

Difficulty classifications, climbing ethics, and southern ice climbing receive brief treatments.

Although intended as a location, orientation, and route-finding guide for the serious climber, the book has potential appeal for readers with a wider range of interests. Rock faces with sufficient character to challenge the climber usually interest backpackers, rock scramblers, amateur geologists, and the general observer, and the climber's guide may offer the only printed means available for allowing such interest a closer focus.

The qualities of a good climbing guide include a crisp and concise text, information that is clean and absolutely correct, ample and superior illustrations, and up-to-date coverage of established climbing routes. This guide has deficiencies on most of these counts. The illustrations are fairly good, particularly for a pocket-size work, and the drawings employed as route finders are conscientiously rendered. But the text tends toward flabbiness, and it is peppered with the kind of small errors that can cause aggravation and loss of time. Climbers will deplore the author's failure to include more recently established routes and may consider the book too little an improvement over an earlier work now out of print.

Yet, it is a flawed book rather than a bad one, and must be recommended as the one guide of its kind presently available. One must be grateful also for the constant enjoinders throughout the text against damaging rocks through needless use of hardware. *Southern Rock* is recommended for inclusion in medium-size and larger public library collections, in high school libraries, and in college and university libraries with recreational collections.

Kenneth Brown, Asheville-Buncombe Library System



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